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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1951  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0097  
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME 0025  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2383

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000111

SIPDIS

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DEPT PLS PASS HHS, CDC, AND APHIS

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TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA SPREADS TO TRIPURA AND NEW AREAS IN WEST BENGAL

REF: KOLKATA 105

11. (U) SUMMARY: On April 6, the Northeast Indian state of Tripura confirmed an outbreak of avian influenza in three villages close to the India-Bangladesh border. In West Bengal, the H5N1 virus appeared in an administrative block in Nadia district. Experts told post that the West Bengal government was "going easy" on its AI response due to upcoming rural elections.  
END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On April 6 evening, the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory in Bhopal confirmed the presence of the H5N1 virus in the northeast state of Tripura. Tripura borders Bangladesh on the East. The virus was found in samples sent from the Mohanpur, Malaya and Tilagang villages of the Dhalai administrative district. These villages are located on the India-Bangladesh border, about 90 miles Northeast of Tripura's capital city of Agartala. The Tripura government had sent the samples for testing after about 3,000 poultry died over the past seven days.

13. (U) On April 7 Tripura's Animal Resource Development (ARD) Department issued the official notification announcing the presence of the virus, and identified areas where culling will start. About 20,000 poultry and ducks will be culled within a 3 mile radius. The culling radius will include eight village council areas, including the three villages from where samples tested positive.

14. (U) Tripura's government has set up 200 Rapid Response Teams. Government contacts told post that there was an initial shortage of Tamiflu, but that on April 7 the government received a sufficient supply of Tamiflu and other hardware from the GOI to begin culling and other response measures.

15. (U) On April 5 the H5N1 virus also appeared in West Bengal's Ranaghat-2 administrative block in Nadia district. Culling is expected to begin on April 7. A state poultry farm is located within the 3 mile culling radius in the block.

16. (U) According to media reports, the GOI has asked West Bengal's ARD Department to provide cages to poultry owners for rearing backyard poultry, but state ARD officials say this idea is a non-starter. Each village raises between 5,000 and 7,000 poultry in domestic backyard operations. One West Bengal ARD official observed, "The state has no time, resource and people to implement this recommendation."

17. (U) COMMENT: The H5N1 virus has found its way to Tripura poultry stock despite a statewide ban on poultry and eggs from West Bengal, and though no one has publicly stated it, there is suspicion that the virus crossed into the state from Bangladesh. The next few days will indicate if cullers in Tripura face the kind of resistance they did in West Bengal. A member of the GOI's monitoring team in West Bengal blamed incomplete culling for the resurfacing of the H5N1 virus in the state. As the GOWB gears up for local elections in early May, it does not want to be seen as vigorously pushing culling -- and jeopardizing the livelihoods of thousands of rural villagers -- before the polls take place. Given such political considerations, W. Bengal will probably continue to see sporadic H5N1 episodes.

SURAMPUDI